

# The Office of Policy & Liaison: Working for You, Always

By Major Stan Zezotarski

**W**hen opportunity knocks at the door of the California National Guard, the Adjutant General's Office of Policy and Liaison has answered.

And they've proactively answered with the intent outlined in The Adjutant General, Major General Paul D. Monroe, Jr.'s legislative action plan – a plan that informs key state and federal elected leaders about what the California National Guard does on a daily basis, and the resources its airmen and soldiers need to continue performing at a high level.

A case in point: The California Air National Guard's F-16 fighter jets have performed admirably, with two jets exceeding 5,000 flying hours, thanks to its ground maintenance crew. It was Policy and Liaison, in conjunction with the Media Services Directorate, that organized Governor's office visits to the Fresno-based unit. Policy and Liaison kept the Governor abreast of what the unit was flying and what state-of-the-art equipment the unit needed for Homeland Defense. As a result, Governor Gray Davis was well-armed with knowledge and information when he announced that he was throwing his support behind acquiring the F-15C fighter jet.

"I've sent a letter to the Secretary of the Air Force, James Ross, asking that he deploy F-15Cs to the 144th Fighter

Wing in Fresno," Davis said. "This fighter wing has protected us since September 11th. It flies missions up and down the state of California and up to Southern Oregon. It deserves the very best fighter equipment it can receive, and the F-15Cs have greater range, better radars, and more air-to-air missiles. The decision is whether they should go to North Dakota or California. There's not a doubt in my mind that they should come to California—particularly in light of news that the Golden Gate Bridge and film studios in Southern California have been targeted by potential terrorists overseas. This new rapid airplane should be deployed to California. We have a far more compelling case to make and I expect the Secretary to respond positively to my request—and the request of the California (Congressional) Delegation."

Policy and Liaison was a conduit to the Congressional Delegation regarding the F-15C and other critical California National Guard issues. The Office of Policy and Liaison has organized legislative lifts, arranged briefings, and organized a community outreach program that has increased the size of its audience.

"Our community outreach program is in its infant stages," said Policy and Liaison's Deputy Director Lieutenant Colonel Joe Righello. "We recently briefed installation staffs about implementing the program. Early results indicate that it's beginning to take root—especially at Camp Roberts."

Righello said his office is working and training staffs from all of the California National Guard's installations, facilities, and armories and encourages these installations to contact his office at (916) 854-3705 for more information. He added that his office is developing a training module and training an instructor to teach its community outreach program as part of Media Service's Unit Public Affairs Representative Course at Camp San Luis Obispo, January 11, 2003.

The California National Guard's legislative action plan has generated other significant successes. Armed with well-thought-out and thought-



Policy and Liaison representatives meet with Mr. Vince Harris, Undersecretary of Cabinet Affairs, Office of the Governor.

PHOTO BY SFC ROBERT PACK



**Governor Davis signs Assembly Bill 2428 into law, protecting soldiers and arimen on State Active Duty or Title 32 from creditors.**

PHOTO BY SSG JESSE FLAGG



provoking brochures, the Office of Policy and Liaison has alerted federal, state, and local elected leaders about the value of replacing the 146th's C-130 Cargo plane with the state-of-the art CC-130J—or "J-Model." Once California's Congressional Delegation understood the need for the new aircraft, they pooled their collective influence into pursuing the acquisition of the more modern aircraft, as well as a new Airborne Fire Fighting System—to replace the unit's antiquated Modular Airborne Fighting System. California received its first new aircraft in May of this year.

"The "J" model is a greatly improved C-130," said Major General Dan Gibson, commander of the California Air National Guard. "It goes higher, faster, carries more, and does it cheaper—both in terms of amount of fuel it uses and the crew."

The Army National Guard has also benefited from the Office of Policy and Liaison's efforts. The California National Guard will receive upgraded Blackhawk helicopters, additional Single Channel Ground and Airborne Radio Systems, and much needed funding for armory maintenance. Youth Programs, targeted toward

helping California's youth find direction in life, has also received a boost through Policy and Liaison's efforts. The Oakland Military Institute received a \$2 million infusion, while the Angel Gate Academy program sustained its budgetary existence.

"We've accomplished a lot," said Lieutenant Colonel Warren Alberts, Policy and Liaison's Director. "But it's through the combined efforts of a staff of 10 and the support of key directorates."

The office has worked very hard to achieve The Adjutant General's intent at the federal, state, and local levels. But the directorate is sensitive to the needs of its soldiers and airmen. At the recent National Guard Association of the United States Conference and Exposition at Long Beach, the Office of Policy and Liaison worked closely with the Governor's staff to use the event as a platform to sign three bills benefiting the rank and file. The Governor signed three bills into law that expand state health care benefits for soldiers and airmen, increase opportunities for home loans, and pave an avenue for recruiting big rig drivers into the California National Guard.

"These were three of many," Alberts said. "California also enacted legislation that protects soldiers and airmen from creditors while on State Active Duty or Title 32 status. The law is similar to the *Federal Soldiers and Sailors Civil Relief Act* reducing credit rates on home, auto purchases, rent, and providing eviction protection for reservists or Guard members who have been mobilized for state or federal duty."

Righello said none of the Office of Policy and Liaison's achievements, however, is as satisfying as the knowledge that our soldiers and airmen can remain focused on their missions, because The Adjutant General is watching out for them and their families.

## State Legislation 1999-2002

Policy and Liaison is solely responsible for identifying and working state legislative issues for California's National Guard. Prior to approaching an elected official regarding a state legislative need, the Department must first request and receive approval from the Governor's Office. We will continue to demonstrate to the Governor that state benefits, whether it's a military income tax exemption, or perhaps state college tuition assistance, is vitally needed for our Guard members and that California is far behind the rest of the nation in state benefits for Guard members.

Several pieces of state legislation regarding the California National Guard, Veterans, and the California Military Museum were passed since 1999. Such legislation, chaptered into law, during the 1999-2002 timeframe is listed by calendar year together with the name of the state legislator who originally introduced the bill.

**Governor Davis announces his staunch support for obtaining F-15Cs for the California Air National Guard's 144th Fighter Wing.**



PHOTO BY SFC ROBERT PACK



PHOTO BY SFC ROBERT PACK

**Governor Gray Davis signs three bills into law that benefit California National Guardsmen. The bills expand health care benefits for soldiers and airmen, increase opportunities for home loans, and pave an avenue for recruiting big rig drivers into the California National Guard.**

## 1999

**SB 36 (Baca)** – Requires California cities and counties to implement a veterans preference system for employment purposes of civil service by 2002, or adopt a resolution identifying reasons why the local agency does not do so.

**SB 770 (McPherson)** – Directs that land within the DeLaveaga Park property, owned by the state and leased by the City of Santa Cruz be exchanged for land owned by the City of Santa Cruz and leased to the state. The remaining land in DeLaveaga Park owned by the state, shall be exclusively used by the National Guard for instruction and training.

**AB 612 (Jackson)** – Increased the number of armories being used as emergency shelters for the homeless from 13 to 31. The law also allowed the Military Department to continue to be reimbursed for the costs associated with running the program. In addition, the sunset date was removed.

## 2000

**SB 1542 (Schiff)** Turning Point Academy: Established “Turning Point Academy” (a youth diversion program) pilot project for first time juvenile offenders (15 year old+ minors).

**SB 1950 (Lewis)** Military leave: inactive duty training – Provides reservists’ inactive duty training to qualify for paid leave if they are public employees. Reservists can use up to 15 days of the 30 days of military leave for IDT.

**AB 1739 (Bock)** Educational opportunities for veterans: Student Aid Commission – This bill establishes a Student Aid Commission to conduct a ‘study’ regarding educational opportunities for veterans.

**AB 938 (Dutra)** Escheat: Military Awards – This legislation allows military awards and decorations to be deemed ‘irreplaceable’ and would require the State Controller to forward such items to the Military Museum.

## 2001

**AB 1024 (Nakano)** *Department-Sponsored Armories* – This legislation changed the Department’s military construction procedures and will save thousands of construction dollars that can be used towards other Guard facility projects. The Military Department now has the option of using the Army Corps of Engineers for facility construction located on state land, rather than the prior mandate of utilizing the Department of General Services.

**AB 1491 (Vargas)** *Department-Sponsored Retired officers: active duty* – This legislation amended state law in order to return retired NCOs to temporary State Active Duty for certain types of duty and then return them to the retired list.

**AB 120 (Havice)** Anti-Discrimination: California National Guard and State Military Reserve personnel: loans and financing – Law passed that prohibits lenders from discriminating against any person who is a military member in regards to a credit contract/loan.

## 2002

**AB 2273 (Dutra)** *Department-Sponsored* CA ARNG Drivers License Program – Amends state law to allow the California Army National Guard and the Department of Motor Vehicles to enter into a special partnership that allows DMV to issue a provisional drivers license (and later a restricted license) to California National Guard recruits who enlist to train as military truck drivers.

**AB 2428 (Correa)** *Department-Sponsored* CA Home Loan Program for Military Reservists Called to Active Service – Expands the Cal-Vet Home Loan program in 2 ways: extends program eligibility to any “veteran” who has been ordered to duty under Title 10 or Title 32; and it also extends eligibility to any reservist who has enlisted for a minimum of 6 years (or been commissioned) and has served at least 1 good year of service.

**AB 1433 (Horton)** *Department-Sponsored* Military service: benefits – Amends state law to provide financial/credit protection, in regards to credit rate reduction on auto/rent leases, mortgage, eviction protection for reservists or Guard members who have been mobilized for state or federal duty.

**SB 711 (Dunn)** *Department-Sponsored* State employees on active duty: benefits – Amends state law: any California state employee ordered to active duty under “War on Terrorism” will be eligible for differential pay between military pay & state-job pay for up to 365 days.

**AB 1850 (Nakano)** Military service: health care benefits – Allows California National Guard members ordered to State Active Duty to be eligible for health benefits for themselves and families after 30 days of duty – for as long as they perform State Active Duty.

**SB 1801 (O’Connell)** Public employees’ compensation – This bill authorizes the Governor – by Executive Order – to extend SB 711’s “differential pay” by an additional 365 days. The Military Department has drafted the Executive Order and will work with the Governor’s staff to get it signed.

**AB 2670 (Wyman)** Income Taxes: victims of terrorism – This legislation extends the exemption from income tax for military personnel who die as a result of duty while engaged in combat or counter-terrorism *within* the United States; also provides for waiver of interest accrued for taxes due to any taxpayer (including a business entity) who is located in an area declared a disaster area by the President or the Governor.

**AB 1965 (Bogh & Chavez)** Public post secondary education: Congressional Medal of Honor recipients – This bill ensures that children (with poverty level income) of a recipient of the Congressional Medal of Honor who was killed in military service, not be subject to tuition or fees at any state colleges.

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### Military Department Budget Change Proposals

The Office of Policy and Liaison has worked every year with the Governor’s Office, Department of Finance, the Legislative Analyst’s Office and Assembly and Senate

Budget Committee members to demonstrate the Military Department’s fiscal needs. With persistent contact and continuously providing data to these entities, the results have dramatically boosted the Military Department’s budget and even added some programs. Some of these budget add-ons include: significant additional state funding for Youth Programs; \$4.5 million for Los Alamitos Joint Forces Training Base Airfield Maintenance and Repair, and portable sodium lights; \$2.5 million for maintenance and repairs at Camp San Luis Obispo, and funding for a cable repairman; funding for the establishment of the Funeral Honors Program; funding for Fresno AVCRAD helicopter repair operations; and Information Technician positions. Policy and Liaison continues to work to ensure that Capital Outlay (construction) projects, such as property acquisition, are funded.

### Legislative Inquires

From 1999 to present, Policy and Liaison has received and resolved nearly 900 legislative inquiries from the Governor’s Office, state and federal elected-officials, as well as inquiries directly to the Department. These inquiries cover a wide spectrum of issues and concerns.

### Projects / Events

The Office of Policy and Liaison is actively working special events and projects on behalf of The Adjutant General. Types of special events include escorting state and federal legislators to Guard-sponsored events and training, and coordinating “Legislator Lifts” for elected officials, supporting the Governor, including when Governor Davis hosted President Fox of Mexico in 2001. Also in 2001, Policy and Liaison coordinated over 40 state and congressional staff members to visit Guard troops during “Golden Spike” annual training at Camp Roberts. Policy and Liaison’s main objective in supporting these types of events is to connect elected officials and their staffs with California National Guard soldiers and airmen. Obtaining our elected officials’ support is extremely crucial to the Military Department’s efforts to procure additional resources for the California National Guard.

### Other events include:

**December 1999** Ensured The Adjutant General, Plans and Operations, and the Military Aide to the Governor had compatible satellite phones with Governor’s staff and other key state agencies for Y2K.

**March 2001**—Policy and Liaison staff coordinated and participated in the West Coast National JROTC Drill Camp and Competition; California National Guard provided personnel, tents, equipment for display, the 1-184 Infantry Battalion performed an air assault demonstration and escorted several federal and state legislators who attended this event.

**March 2000** – Coordinated Congressional Reception for federal representatives in Washington, D.C.

**California National Guard Administrative Team** – Annually, since Governor Davis has been in office, Policy and Liaison has headed a team of eight soldiers and airmen to work in the Governor’s office for six weeks to prepare bills for the Governor’s consideration and signature. 🐻